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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

MIAMI

NY FILE NO 58-356 EPD

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| PORT MADE AT NEW YORK | DATE WHEN MADE 10/5/45 | PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE 8/23-25, 27-30; 9/18-21, 24-30; 10/1-3/45 | REPORT MADE BY HUGH L. STEGER |
| TITLE "CHANGED" IN HENRY COLT, was: Irving J. Colt, Jack Colt, Irving Cohen, Irving J. Cohen, Isadore Cohen, Isidore Cohen, Irving Finkelstein, Irving Kessler, Jack Stern, Jack Winklestein; JOSEPH MARKOWITZ; JOSEPH CORNICK, WILLIE RIVERS DAVIE; ABRAHAM BROWN | | | CHARACTER OF CASE BRJBERY |

SUMMARY OF FACTS: On marriage license of Subject COLT to ANNA BLUM, April 28, 1923, COLT stated he was born in Bucharest, Roumania. Certified copy obtained. This information verified by ANNA BLUM COLT and Subject COLT's mother, BETTY KESSLER, aka Betty Cohen, Brooklyn, N. Y. Her statement set out. COLT's father, HYMAN COHEN, aka Hyman Kessler, and brothers ABRAHAM, ISAAC, HARRY, all deceased. Mother states she brought COLT to U. S. with brothers at age of four, entering at NYC. Records of Immigration and Naturalization Service, NYC, disclose entry of BESSIE KOHN and sons, ABRAHAM, ISAAC, UCHER, and SALOMON at NYC June 11, 1907. Husband of BESSIE given as CHAIM KOHN who paid passage. Family destined to 192 Flower St., Brooklyn. BESSIE described as twenty-eight, born "Bobassarri, Roumania", with last permanent address Bucharest. No record of Subject COLT's birth in Brooklyn, NY, as claimed. NY Supreme Court records show COLT changed name from ISIDORE COHEN to JACK COLT effective March 5, 1929. Certified copy obtained. Investigation by NYC Police Department NY District Attorney's office re suicide of MARY BARTON, aka Mary Grundhoefer, Mary Chastain, foster daughter of FLORENCE COLT, present wife of Subject COLT, set out. Information set out regarding establishment of trust fund by attorneys of GEORGE HUNTINGTON HARTFORD, JR. for EDWARD BARTON COLT, illegitimate child of MARY BARTON and HARTFORD. Proceeds reportedly are being paid to Subject COLT and FLORENCE COLT who have custody of child as result of their signing birth certificates purporting to be parents of this child. Subject COLT convicted on charge of destroying insured property at Mineola, Nassau County, N. Y.

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|--|-------------------------|--|
| APPROVED AND FORWARDED <i>[Signature]</i> | SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE | DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES 1374-71 |
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| 3 - Bureau 4 - Miami (8 Encls.) 1 - USA, Miami 2 - New York | | |

cc D.R. 10 29-45 gell/mad

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Feb. 27, 1930 and received two to four years, sentence suspended, and placed on probation two years. Arrested July 1, 1936, NYC, on abandonment of first wife, ANNA COLT. Bail discharged after alimony payments made. Pictures obtained of Subject COLT. WILLIAM LOUIS GRUNDHOEFER, former husband of FLORENCE COLT, states she was operating as prostitute in NYC at time of his marriage to her in 1922. Credit information indicates Subject COLT in bankruptcy, NYC, Dec. 1934, \$22,781 liabilities, and again in Feb. 1935, \$2,000 liabilities. NYC P.D. negative as to FLORENCE COLT and aliases. I. N. S., NYC, checked for naturalization of subject, his mother and father, under all names and aliases available with negative results. Records of City College of New York, Columbia University, and P. S. 148, were checked for identifiable record with Subject COLT with negative results.

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REFERENCES: Miami teletypes, August 22, 27, 30, September 17, 20, 27, 28, October 1 and 2, 1945.
Miami teletype to Bureau and New York, September 26, 1945.
Miami teletype to New York and Philadelphia, September 27, 1945.
Teletypes to Miami, August 25, 26, 30, September 24th through 28th, October 1, 2 and 3, 1945.
Report of Special Agent Robert S. Dunham, Miami, August 23, 1945.

DETAILS: The title of this report is being marked changed to reflect the following additional aliases of Subject JOHN HENRY COLT which were obtained from the sources set out below: Irving J. Colt, Jack Colt, Irving Cohen, Irving J. Cohen, Isadore Cohen, Isidore Cohen, Irving Finkelstein, Irving Kessler, Isidore Kessler, Jack Stern, Jack Wincklestein. The names of the additional subjects, JAMES JOSEPH CORNICK, WILLIE RIVERS DAVIE, and ABRAHAM "POP" BROWN, were obtained from referenced Miami teletypes dated September 17th and 20th, 1945.

Background of Subject COLT:

Mrs. BETTY KESSLER, 477 Van Buren Street, Apartment 3, Brooklyn, New York, stated that she is also known by the name of BETTY COHEN and is the mother of IRVING COHEN who is known to her as JACK COLT and JOHN H. COLT. Mrs. KESSLER first stated that she married her husband, HYMAN KESSLER, in Roumania and had four children born in Bucharest, namely, ISAAC, HARRY, ABRAHAM, and IRVING. She advised that ISAAC and ABRAHAM both died when

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were repeated and it was in answer to them that the body was found.

It was learned that both parents of MARY BARTON were dead. She formerly resided with Mr. and Mrs. GEORGE PEAKE, 215th Street and Broadway, who then resided at about 157 West 58th Street.

In the report it was also disclosed that GRUNDHOEFER married FLORENCE ~~WIXER~~ who had an illegitimate son named JERRY BARTON. It was disclosed that on July 17, 1932 FLORENCE and WILLIAM GRUNDHOEFER adopted MARY BARTON and took care of her education.

Investigation disclosed that JACK COLT formerly operated a speak-easy at 13 East 31st Street, New York City. The criminal record as set out above was included in the investigation.

According to the investigation, in 1936 MARY BARTON met GEORGE HUNTINGTON HARTFORD, JR. and an illegitimate child was born to her in New York City in about 1937. It was alleged that half a million dollar trust fund had been set up for the child's care during its life. It was also pointed out that MARY BARTON had also been married to WEBSTER PHILIPS and to a man named WOODRUFF, both degenerates. It was noted that HARTFORD was the son of EDWARD HARTFORD and is an heir to the A & P COMPANY fortune.

CARUTHERS EWING, Attorney for HARTFORD, advised the police that MARY BARTON had written a letter to Mrs. JOHN ~~COLT~~, postmarked 9 a.m., Station M, September 8, 1941, on stationery of the Hotel Belvidere, 319 West 48th Street, New York City.

Mr. EWING, in the presence of Detective WILLIAM FLORENCE, who handled the case, and KARL GREBOW, who handled the case for the District Attorney's Office, New York City, telephoned Mr. ARTHUR J. PHALEN, 810 Colorado Building, Washington, D. C., and verified the fact that the suicide note had been sent to him by FLORENCE COLT and the original was in his possession. A photostat was obtained.

At this time PHALEN also told EWING, according to the New York City Police Department's report, that PHALEN had proof of prior attempts by MARY BARTON to commit suicide once in Paris about five years previous and once in Los Angeles at the COLT home a year and a half previous. PHALEN is alleged to have stated that HARTFORD was being blackmailed by the COLTS.

The following is the suicide note allegedly written by MARY BARTON:

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was simply trying to get control of the trust fund. He said that his investigation disclosed no indication of prostitution on the part of FLORENCE COLT. He said that their case had been closed December 16, 1941 with the conclusion of suicide, but that as a result of newspaper articles in connection with the custody suit filed by WILLIAM GRUNDHOEFER they had opened it to make other inquiries in January 1943.

Newspaper clippings regarding the MARY BARTON Case from the New York Daily News and the New York Journal-American were obtained from the personal file of Mr. WILLIAM L. GRUNDHOEFER, 309 West 57th Street, New York City, and were forwarded to the Miami Field Division by air mail special delivery on September 24, 1945.

Confidential Informant T-1 made available clippings and file on the MARY BARTON Case, and it was noted that with the exception of two clippings, September 12th and September 17, 1941, all others had been furnished in the above-mentioned letter to Miami. Information in the remaining clippings is included in those sent and consequently will not be forwarded.

described

From the confidential file of T-1 the following letter was made available. This letter was dated January 18, 1943 and was from T. EDWARD DANTE. It bore no return address but was postmarked "Springfield, Massachusetts". In this letter the individual stated that MARY CHASTAIN was born of a "distinguished Southern family in Alabama" and that both of her parents were dead. She has one sister and did have an aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. GEORGE PEAKE, 145 West 77th Street. According to DANTE, MARY BARTON left the PEAKE's custody in 1931 and was later adopted by the GRUNDHOEFER's. He stated that JOHN COLT worked for the PWA in "Jersey" at \$80 a month during 1935 and claimed he could not enter New York State or own property in the state.

DANTE alleged that FLORENCE COLT "coached" MARY to get money out of HUNTINGTON HARTFORD and stated that MARY BARTON told Mrs. GEORGE PEAKE that FLORENCE COLT once stated: "HUNTINGTON HARTFORD has plenty of money and we've got to get some of it while we can". DANTE alleged "the baby didn't just happen", and that after the settlement was made and the trust fund set up both FLORENCE COLT (who was then FLORENCE GRUNDHOEFER) and Subject COLT divorced their respective spouses and were married. He noted that they had the same lawyer and same witnesses for the divorces.

DANTE accused Subject COLT of stating: "I don't need Mary any more to get money out of Hartford". He also said that Subject COLT remarked to a friend after MARY's death "Too bad, I was just getting ready to hit Hartford for another million".

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Mr. DANTE stated that Subject COLT was known to him also by the names of JACK STERN and JACK WINCKLESTEIN.

Mr. CAMPBELL, New York Journal-American, South Street, New York City, made available the newspaper clippings in the library of that paper. No clippings in addition to those already furnished the Office of Origin were located with the exception of one dated April 16, 1937 which discussed a "strip-tease" dance of MARY BARTON then being featured at the Jimmy Kelly Club, Greenwich Village, New York City. All information in the other clippings was included in same.

Miss ROSE HIGGS, 140 Claremont Avenue, New York City, was contacted in an effort to find WILLIAM L. GRUNDHOEFER. She was not aware of his present whereabouts but stated that GRUNDHOEFER was prone to exaggerate, and she recalled hearing him discuss the \$500,000 trust fund set up for EDWARD BARTON COLT and making the statement that he planned to get possession of the child and of that money. She said that his interest seemed to be principally in the money and that he bragged about how rich he would be if he could succeed.

GUIDO and VIRGIN MINA CASERTA, 344 West 17th Street, Apartment 3B, verified information set out above in the police department report and stated that MARY BARTON's child, whom they referred to as "BUZZIE", is presently in the custody of the COLT's whom they stated received approximated \$1200 a month from the trust fund set up by HUNTINGTON HARTFORD. They pointed out that FLORENCE COLT and Subject COLT signed the birth certificate of EDWARD BARTON COLT as the father and mother and claimed the child as their own. They recalled that one time MARY BARTON wired the COLT's in California for \$200 to make a payment on her Pontiac automobile. The COLT's refused to give her any money or to allow her to see the child.

The CASERTA's pointed out that MARY BARTON had been married to WEBSTER PHILIPS and BART WOODRUFF and had received divorces from both of these men.

They said that they had known MARY BARTON since 1940 and had lived with her in the Windsor Hotel and the Belvidere Hotel, New York City. They knew that MARY BARTON received a flat money settlement from GEORGE HUNTINGTON HARTFORD after the birth of the child and said that she gave the money to charity. They said that she had accepted no money for herself.

The CASERTA's said that they last saw MARY BARTON in July 1941 when they left to play an engagement in Buffalo, New York. Prior to that

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time they had lived together. Mrs. CASERTA said MARY BARTON had just written her a letter a short time before her death outlining a new dance act and suggesting that they come back and obtain booking together.

The CASERTA's said that MARY BARTON had told them that she wanted the child back because she was not satisfied with the way the COLT's were caring for him. According to them, the child was never told of its correct parents and that MARY BARTON in the child's presence referred to him as her brother.

They denied offers of money or trips to South America to prevent their giving information. It should be noted that Mr. CASERTA is presently in the United States Navy.

The records of the Surrogate Court, New York County Hall of Records, Chambers and Centre Streets, New York City, disclosed under Number A1888 in the year 1941, litigation over the estate of MARY CHASTAIN GRUNDHOEFER, also known as MARY BARTON. The attorney for WILLIAM L. GRUNDHOEFER, who was seeking custody of the child and an accounting of the estate, was LEWIS LEEDS. The names of the attorneys for JOHN COLT were given as KARELSON & KARELSON by MORTON G. ROSENBERG.

The allegation on the part of GRUNDHOEFER was that benefits of the \$250,000 to \$500,000 trust fund in favor of EDWARD BARTON COLT were being paid to FLORENCE COLT monthly but were not being used for the child's benefit. The petition was filed January 9, 1943, and a discovery order was requested asking that JOHN COLT appear and also that HUNTINGTON HARTFORD, JR. appear.

There was an affidavit in the file from VIRGIN MINA CASERTA, also known as TANGIA, stating that MARY BARTON had told her that her son, EDWARD BARTON COLT, was born on August 8, 1938 in New York City while she was then living with Subject COLT and FLORENCE COLT. In her affidavit, she also stated that MARY had consulted an attorney prior to her death in an effort to get back her child. She stated that on May 14, 1941 GEORGE HUNTINGTON HARTFORD, JR. had visited MARY BARTON at the Hotel Belvidere in her presence and discussed the child and his trust fund. On January 12, 1943 the application to order HUNTINGTON HARTFORD to appear was denied. Notice of appeal was given on the same date. No further action was taken.

Mr. EMIL K. ELLIS, 1270 Sixth Avenue, New York City, advised that he had met MARY BARTON in California, and several months before her death had been consulted by her in New York City concerning the custody of her child. At that time MARY BARTON told him that she was afraid that "the HARTFORD's" would try to obtain custody of the child and asked his counsel in the matter.

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He said that she never consulted him further, and that he had no knowledge of any action actually taken by the HARTFORD's to obtain custody of the child.

Mr. WILLIAM LOUIS GRUNDHOEFER, 309 West 57th Street, Apartment 1608, (Office, 250 West 57th Street, care of KEYSTONE Organization), advised that he first met FLORENCE MIXER in Bennington, Vermont, in 1913. He said that she was working in a mill there at the time. Later in about 1921 he saw her in a restaurant in New York City and married her on October 21, 1922 at New York City. He said that she was originally from North Adams, Massachusetts. He believed she was born in Clarksburg, Massachusetts.

GRUNDHOEFER admitted that at the time he knew FLORENCE MIXER in New York City prior to their marriage she was a prostitute and was operating as such at two different locations. He said that she had an apartment with an individual known as NETTIE GRIFFIN at 180 Claremont Avenue, New York City, which he believed to be Apartment #3 on the first floor. He said that she also worked as a prostitute for a madam whose name he could not recall who operated a "call house" on the corner of 52d Street and Broadway which he believes to be 225 West 52d Street which is now the Alvin Hotel. He recalled that one girl who was also working as a prostitute at this location was named JEAN MURTHA, and he believes the latter individual later contacted FLORENCE around 1933 or 1934 in reference to trouble that she had become involved in with the Newark police.

GRUNDHOEFER said that prior to his marriage, he told FLORENCE MIXER that he was willing to forgive and to forget her past provided she would admit all of her activity. He said that at this time she admitted she had been operating as a prostitute in New York City for four to five years previous to 1922 and admitted operating at the corner of 52d Street and Broadway as well as at 180 Claremont Avenue. GRUNDHOEFER stated that he had visited her at both places but at no time had paid money to her.

GRUNDHOEFER said that sometime after their marriage, which he recalled to be subsequent to the death of FLORENCE's mother, she admitted to him that she had an illegitimate child named JERRY whose father was believed to be a man named READ of North Adams, Massachusetts, and asked that he come to live with them. GRUNDHOEFER said that the boy lived with them in New York City but was not adopted by him. He said the boy used the stage name of JERRY BARTON but had also used the name of GRUNDHOEFER. He recalled that this individual became involved in trouble in 1936 and received two years suspended sentence on some charge.

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WILLIAM GRUNDHOEFER recalled that it was through JERRY BARTON that he and FLORENCE knew MARY BARTON, whose true name was MARY CHASTAIN. He said that MARY and JERRY met while attending public school in New York City and as a result of the acquaintanceship he and FLORENCE legally adopted MARY CHASTAIN. He produced record showing that the adoption was recorded in Volume 107, Page 271, Number 5228, County Court of Queens, Jamaica, Long Island. Adoption took place on July 19, 1932. MARY BARTON was born January 29, 1915.

GRUNDHOEFER said that FLORENCE's father is also dead. He said that he was not familiar with her background in North Adams. He said that he had no knowledge of FLORENCE's ever being in Bridgeport, Connecticut, or practising prostitution there. He said that he was divorced in about 1936 from FLORENCE and that she had obtained the divorce in Florida. He understood that she married JACK COLT.

He said that he had never met Subject COLT although he had found out that he was a bootlegger and had operated out of the SUPREME BAR AND GRILL, 13 East 31st Street. He recalled that some officer in the New York City Police Precinct near that address gave him that information. He also heard that COLT had gone to New Jersey and had become mixed up in the operation of a coal yard during 1937 and 1939 but had no other details.

GRUNDHOEFER also produced a photostatic copy of the birth certificate of EDWARD BARTON COLT obtained by him which indicated that the father of the child was JOHN COLT, 2927 North West 12th Street, Miami, Florida, and the mother was FLORENCE COLT, same address. The child was born August 12, 1938 at the Le ROY SANITARIUM, 40 East 61st Street, New York City. The birth certificate was #20544. GRUNDHOEFER said that he had contacted the doctor and nurses at the hospital who stated that MARY BARTON was the actual mother of the child.

GRUNDHOEFER related that he had sent MARY BARTON to dancing school and had later learned that she had gone to Berlin, Vienna, and Paris with HUNTINGTON HARTFORD. He also claimed that HUNTINGTON HARTFORD had given her a \$37,000 diamond ring which COLT claimed he had sold to the father of SHIRLEY TEMPLE in Hollywood. GRUNDHOEFER stated that he contacted this individual telephonically and was told no such ring had been purchased. GRUNDHOEFER believed that COLT and his wife were responsible for many of the valuable articles belonging to MARY BARTON being unaccounted for.

He claimed that the trust fund set up for the child was \$1,000,000. He also claimed that FLORENCE COLT had obtained the pawn tickets and valuable fur coats belonging to MARY BARTON, but he had no proof of this.

WILLIAM GRUNDHOEFER explained that in connection with the custody suit brought by him, set out above, that no further action was taken because the lawyers of BENJAMIN VAN RAALTE and HARTFORD made the statements that

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accordingly desired to draw a check in favor of Mr. CARLSON in the amount of \$4,500 and asked CARLSON to hold this money in safe keeping for him. CARLSON declined and told him that in his opinion it would be best to place the money in a safe deposit box. COLT readily agreed and secured CARLSON's endorsement on the back of the check in order that he might obtain the money. CARLSON said that COLT then used this check as a defense, stating that he had paid CARLSON in full for his share in the barbecue stand although CARLSON did not receive any money.

CARLSON also related that he had joint ownership with COLT in two race horses, "PANTHER CREEK" and "BUZZIE JUNIOR". He said that he managed to salvage one of these horses out of the deal.

Mr. CARLSON related that his acquaintanceship with FLORENCE was begun when FLORENCE, who was then married to WILLIAM GRUNDHOEFER, resided in his neighborhood.

Mr. CARLSON said that his attorney in Miami who handled the court proceedings in connection with the J. & J. BAR-BE-CUE STAND incident was Mr. FRED WARD, 1000 Lincoln Road, Miami Beach.

Mr. CARLSON also pointed out that he was aware of the trust fund set up in favor of EDWARD BARTON COLT now in custody of Subject COLT and FLORENCE COLT and stated that he had seen checks from this fund made out to FLORENCE COLT in the sum of \$1,000 although he understood that the checks were now for approximately \$900. He did not recall the name of the bank or the person drawing the check.

Mrs. SIGRID CARLSON and her daughter, Mrs. ROBERT DONCOURT, were interviewed at their residence at 96 Irma Avenue, Port Washington, New York, by Special Agent William A. Johnson. Neither Mrs. CARLSON nor Mrs. DONCOURT could furnish any information as to the birthplace of the subject COLT, but Mrs. CARLSON stated that she had always thought that COLT had been born in Brooklyn, New York.

Mrs. CARLSON stated that she had known FLORENCE COLT, the subject's present wife, for about twenty years, and although she has not seen her for over five years, she stated that FLORENCE COLT was one of her best friends. According to Mrs. CARLSON, FLORENCE COLT was born in North Adams, Massachusetts. She stated that FLORENCE COLT was a very fine woman, a woman of considerable means, and she could furnish no derogatory information about her. She verified all the information as to the marriage of FLORENCE COLT to WILLIAM GRUNDHOEFER, the story of the adopted daughter, MARY BARTON, who committed suicide in 1941, and the story of MARY BARTON's child by GEORGE HUNTINGTON HARTFORD, Jr.

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a letter received in the New York Office from their Miami Office, COLT lived at 302 West 12th Street, and was identifiable with the SUPREME GRILL INC. on Fifth Avenue. It was indicated he went into bankruptcy in February 1935 with liabilities of \$2,000 and no assets, and that he went into voluntary bankruptcy in December 1934 with liabilities of \$22,781 and no assets. There was criticism of the failure of the SUPREME GRILL due to the fact that the chattel mortgage on all assets in the amount of \$5,000 was held by private persons. The subject was interviewed presumably in Miami on January 27, 1942 and denied living at 302 West 12th Street and claimed that he was not identifiable with the above-named restaurant. He stated that he had been a traveling salesman for the BROOKLYN DRESS COMPANY and had retired in 1934. In the summer of 1941 COLT and his wife were at 202 South Rockingham Avenue, Brentwood, Heights, California, returning to Florida in September 1941.

Efforts to locate any record of the BROOKLYN DRESS COMPANY through directories and sources of information were negative.

Miss N. MANNING and Mr. R. W. BERGER, Confidential Secretaries, A. & P. COMPANY, 420 Lexington Avenue, advised that GEORGE HUNTINGTON HARTFORD, JR. is presently in the United States Coast Guard and they last heard from him on August 7, 1945 at which time he was stationed on Saipan. His address is: Lieutenant G. H. Hartford, USCGR, USA, FS-179, Navy 920, FPO, San Francisco, California. They also advised that information concerning him might be obtained through Miss HARDECKER, 435 East 52d Street, New York City, Telephone PLaza 9-5462, the confidential secretary to the HARTFORD family.

Miss AGNES STANTON, secretary of Mr. CARUTHERS EWING, General Counsel for the A.&P. COMPANY, 420 Lexington Avenue, advised as of September 27, 1945 that Mr. EWING at the present time is in Danville, Illinois, in connection with the A. & P. anti-trust suit where he will remain for the next six or eight weeks. According to information set out above, Mr. EWING would possibly have information concerning the trust fund set up by GEORGE HUNTINGTON HARTFORD, JR. for EDWARD BARTON COLT or would have access to this information.

Mr. GUSTAVE I. JAHR, Emigrant Bank Building, 10 East 43d Street, Room 1005, advised that Mr. LEWIS LEEDS was associated with him until January 1944 at which time he left to accept a position as senior attorney with the OPA in Washington, D. C., where he resides at 4310 Brandywine Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. He said that Mr. LEEDS handled the cases for both Mrs. ANNA COLT and WILLIAM GRUNDHOEFER and has all the papers in connection with them.

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CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANTS

The Confidential Informants mentioned in the report of Special Agent Hugh L. Steger, dated October 5, 1945 at New York City, are as follows:

T-1

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New York City.

(This informant specifically requested that information obtained from their confidential file not be attributed to her.)

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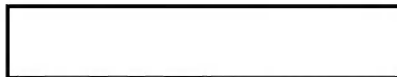


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New York City.

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New York City.

(The officials of this agency have requested that information furnished through them not be disclosed under the name of their organization.)

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SA: HUGH L. STEGER

DATE: 10-5-45

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